**Rev 21:9-14, 22-27** Then came one of the seven angels who had the seven bowls full of the seven last plagues and spoke to me, saying, “Come, I will show you the Bride, the wife of the Lamb.” **10** And he carried me away in the Spirit to a great, high mountain, and showed me the holy city Jerusalem coming down out of heaven from God, **11**  having the glory of God, its radiance like a most rare jewel, like a jasper, clear as crystal. **12** It had a great, high wall, with twelve gates, and at the gates twelve angels, and on the gates the names of the twelve tribes of the sons of Israel were inscribed— **13** on the east three gates, on the north three gates, on the south three gates, and on the west three gates. **14** And the wall of the city had twelve foundations, and on them were the twelve names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb. **22** And I saw no temple in the city, for its temple is the Lord God the Almighty and the Lamb. **23** And the city has no need of sun or moon to shine on it, for the glory of God gives it light, and its lamp is the Lamb. **24** By its light will the nations walk, and the kings of the earth will bring their glory into it, **25** and its gates will never be shut by day—and there will be no night there. **26** They will bring into it the glory and the honor of the nations. **27** But nothing unclean will ever enter it, nor anyone who does what is detestable or false, but only those who are written in the Lamb’s book of life.

**Matthew 19:23-30** And Jesus said to his disciples, “Truly, I say to you, only with difficulty will a rich person enter the kingdom of heaven. **24**  Again I tell you, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich person to enter the kingdom of God.” **25** When the disciples heard this, they were greatly astonished, saying, “Who then can be saved?” **26** But Jesus looked at them and said, “With man this is impossible, but with God all things are possible.” **27** Then Peter said in reply, “See, we have left everything and followed you. What then will we have?” **28** Jesus said to them, “Truly, I say to you, in the new world, when the Son of Man will sit on his glorious throne, you who have followed me will also sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel. **29**  And everyone who has left houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or children or lands, for my name’s sake, will receive a hundredfold and will inherit eternal life. **30** But many who are first will be last, and the last first.

God gives new eyes to see through all tears witnessing to the truth of Christ.

1. Eyes able to see purity.
2. Eyes with concern for the poor.
3. Eyes fixed upon Christ in persecution.

In the name of Jesus. Amen. Hanukkah started yesterday for those in Judaism. They light the Menorah, which is a Hebrew lampstand that has eight candles. This eight-day festival commemorates how the Maccabean Jews revolted against Greek suppression in 2nd century B.C. taking back a defiled temple in Jerusalem. As Christians we also use the Advent wreath with candles to countdown the coming glory of God in the flesh at Christmas. However, tonight is also a commemoration of light for the Church with a young woman from around 280 A.D. Her name is St. Lucia or we could also call her Lucy, which literally means, “light.”

Some traditions in Europe honor her with a festival of lights or young women wear a crown of lighted candles to honor this young martyr of the Church. The story goes that Lucy was born in Syracuse, Sicily to a rich and noble pagan family. Her father died while she was young, so his wife and daughter were now unprotected. While her mother, Eutychia, secured a future for Lucy by betrothal to a pagan man. Lucy became a Christian taking vows of virginity and selling her dowry to the poor. The pagan man in anger denounced the betrothal, turned her in to an anti-Christian government, and Lucy was put to death in 304 A.D. Here was a saint that had her light shine before others to show greater glory from the Gospel. God gives new eyes to see through all tears witnessing to the truth of Christ.

1. **Eyes looking to Christ see what comes from Him is purity.**
2. Virginity today is a shameful word that means you are less than person.

* The sixties has turned self-fulfillment of one’s body as the standard for life.
* St. Paul humbles us stating, “Now the works of the flesh are evident: sexual immorality, impurity, sensuality…” (Gal 5:19).

1. Sadly there was not much of a refuge for women in a pagan culture.

* At the time of Lucy sex was either for pleasure (prostitution) or marriage being used to claim position.

1. However, God has made known a special place for virginity and a chase life.

* Isaiah the prophet told a faithless king Ahaz of Judah, “Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign. Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel” (Isaiah 7:14)
* Christ is faithful more than to individual people, but to His Church as the angel told St. John, “Come, I will show you the Bride, the wife of the Lamb.”
* Chastity is a witness of Christ who alone saves sinners, but also how the baptized belong to Christ and not the flesh with its passions and desires.

1. **Eyes cherishing Christ have concern for the poor.**
2. The actions taken by Lucy’s mother came from being deathly ill. Lucy prayed for her and she received healing. Supposedly, it gave an opportunity to redirect her dowry saying, "...whatever you give away at death for the Lord's sake you give because you cannot take it with you. Give now to the true Savior, while you are healthy, whatever you intended to give away at your death."[[1]](#footnote-1)
3. When Jesus warned about riches and entering His kingdom the disciples threw up their hands saying, “Who then can be saved?” Yet, the answer was God’s grace at work for, “With man this is impossible, but with God all things are possible” (Matt 19:26).
4. Since the Father in heaven is so generous in His riches by sending His Son, so too the gift of generosity is putting riches to good use to honor the salvation that none can buy by their efforts.
5. **Eyes focused upon Christ overcome persecution.**
6. Lucy lived in dangerous times, which meant when her future husband no longer had the goods, the pagan way of getting back was to turn her in as a Christian setting her up for death.
7. The U.S. Supreme Court received a case last week of a Christian baker declining to design a cake for a gay wedding. Alliance of Defending Freedom attorneys said this decision, “…will have a major impact on religious freedom in America, collectively stating, ‘It could very well be the most important decision in our lifetime’ in terms of religious liberty.”[[2]](#footnote-2)
8. How we face persecution is to see suffering and loss for the sake of Christ in a different light that shines by nothing else than God’s love for us.

The waiting of Advent reminds us there is something or someone present more than darkness. Lucia reminds us that by baptism Christ has shined upon us His faithfulness that the world cannot give. He tells His Church that, “You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden” (Matt 5:14). God gives new eyes to see through all tears witnessing to the truth of Christ. Amen. In the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Amen.

1. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Saint\_Lucy [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. https://blogs.lcms.org/2017/supreme-court-hears-case-of-colorado-baker-under-fire-for-marriage-view [↑](#footnote-ref-2)